

G. Brown Goode

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

SPENCER F. BAIRD, Secretary  
S. P. LANGLEY, Assistant Secretary,  
in charge of Exchanges, Publications and Library  
G. BROWN GOODE, Assistant Secretary,  
in charge of U. S. National Museum

OFFICE OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
IN CHARGE OF U. S. NATIONAL MUSEUM

Washington, October 23, 1887.

My dear Dr Gray:

A strong impulse moves me to write to you today - perhaps stimulated by the knowledge that Prof. Langley will see you this week, and that you will be talking over together the affairs of the Institution.

I want to say, first of all, that I am personally very desirous to see Professor Langley made Secretary. I hope that he will see his way clear to take the place. I fear, however, that he has some hesitation, foreseeing as he does that the work will be heavy, and its details irksome, while it will be practically impossible for him to seclude himself for work in his special researches. At the same time, I hope he will ~~be~~ <sup>be</sup> deeply impressed with

the opportunity which the Secretaryship offers, for helping others. I have a strong personal liking for Professor Langley, since I have come to know him, and am anxious to help him to the extent of my power, and to do all I can to lighten the difficulties of his position. I fully realize what a sacrifice he will make in giving up Allegheny, but I fancy he will get very much interested in the work here if he tries it.

I wish it were practicable to have the matter decided soon. January seems a long time away and we really have had no one to direct our work here ~~since~~ for many months. — to give it. I mean, that constant personal supervision which only a resident director can give. Of course Prof. Langley as Secretary will ~~handle~~ <sup>act</sup> ~~matter~~ much more fully than he has felt inclined to do as Acting Secretary, and I shall be glad to feel that the rudder is in a strong hand.

The Smithsonian is of course all right, or will be after the new Secretary shall have come into power. Congress cannot materially cripple it, and a little vigorous reconstruction of the staff will greatly increase its efficiency. It really stands about where Prof. Huxley left it, for Prof. Baird seemed to feel great delicacy about making any changes.

The Museum can, I think, be kept in its present corner. It is increasing daily in popularity, and its usefulness both to science and education ought to become greater each year. - and its influence ought to reach out over the whole country. Its great danger is in its tendency to expansion. More collections demand more buildings. - more buildings more money. Larger appropriations make it more conspicuous and more likely to attract, or to political interference. It seems to me that if it should be separated from the Smithsonian, both Museum and Smithsonian would lose immensely. - and Science in equal degree.

The opportunities for general usefulness which the Secretaryship affords.

Independently of the fact that Professor Langley was Professor Baird's candidate for the succession, I am impressed with the idea that he would be an excellent man for the place. This is the result of my own observation of him, <sup>and the impression made by</sup> and of many long talks which we have had together. I do not know of any one else who seems to me at all so well fitted.

I only wish that the matter might be settled soon. It is many months since we have had a strong hand at the helm, for Professor Baird had done little for a year before his death and Prof. Langley as acting secretary, and about much of the time at that, has of course not felt called upon to act very vigorously. Will it be necessary to wait till January. It would be unfortunate, for although our ship is ~~not~~ is no danger of stranding, she is "kew to" and it is

discouraging not to be making any progress.

I wish I might talk to you about the situation here. The feeling of personal bereavement is very great with me. For Professor Bana was almost like a father, and for sixteen years I have been with him almost <sup>every day</sup> ~~daily~~ - often several hours a day - and have had a share in almost all of his labor, not only in the museum, but in the Yish Commission, with which I was now connected officially, but which I gave much time to, largely because he was interested in it, and thought that I could help him. I can't tell you how I feel the loss of him, not only as a personal friend, but as a strong self-reliant helpful superior officer.

I do not know how far it will be possible to sustain the two interests to which he was especially devoted - the Museum and the Yish Commission - on the same increasing scale of usefulness. Sometimes it looks almost hopeless, especially in the case of the

letter, for his personal influence in Washington was enormous  
and was the growth of thirty years. Loyalty to  
his memory and interest in his work will however lead  
me to do all in my power to pursue all the  
important features of his work

I feel very lawless and helpless, for I have no one  
to whom I can go for advice and direction, as I  
used to go to Professor Baird; while the people in  
the Museum and the Fish Commission, all expect me to  
advise with and direct them.

I write about these matters to you because I know  
how much Professor Baird used to talk with you  
concerning his plans and hopes for the Museum,  
and the Fish Commission. You are moreover the oldest  
member of the Board of Regents, and the only <sup>only</sup> ~~veteran~~  
valued among them all. You are in fact the <sup>only</sup> personal  
bracket Prof. Langley, with whom I feel that is really  
proper that I should speak of all these things.

The organization of the Museum is very thorough but  
the methods of administration are of necessity very  
complicated. It is unlike any other museum in the world,  
since its growth depends entirely upon the efforts of  
its officers, and of ~~the~~ correspondents, there being  
practically no fund for purchase of collections.  
The pay-roll of the museum is ~~probably~~  
~~less~~ ~~than~~ <sup>much</sup> greater in proportion to its income  
than that of most museums which are managed in the  
same degree. It is this very peculiarity which makes  
it so appropriate and adjunct to an institution for  
the increase and diffusion of knowledge, for it  
falls under the control of the Secretary of the  
Smithsonian Institution; a thoroughly organized staff  
of experts and investigators, representing every department  
of zoology, botany, geology, and anthropology.

Prof. Langley takes a very broad view of the relations  
of the museum to the Institution, and under his direction

as Secretary, I believe a satisfactory administration of its  
affairs would be practicable.

The Fish Commission is the third interest. For this  
I am, it seems more directly responsible, and it is a  
great source of anxiety to me. It is really a  
great scientific organism, without any organization  
and without a head which it can rightfully  
claim for its own. Its ~~is~~ ~~has~~ interests and those  
of the Museum intertwine in manifold ways, and  
indeed, it really controls some very important departments  
of the Museum, — the fishes, and the marine invertebrates,  
and the publications of the Museum and  
the Fish Commission have very much in common.

The "Albatross", which is now better equipped than the  
"Challenger" was and which is just starting for the  
Pacific, with a staff of three naturalists is <sup>capable of</sup> ~~a great~~ of  
great usefulness to science, in connection, legitimately with  
its work for the fisheries. Then, above all, there



is that great scientific status at Woods Hole - and  
in the establishment of this sort of the scientific  
schools have had a share. Harvard, Princeton,  
Johns Hopkins, and William among others, and  
it is just ready for work.

I might write a great deal about the Com=  
mission, but you are familiar with its history, and can  
easily understand the nature of my perplexities.

Of course the main question is, how to maintain  
the scientific character of the Commission, while at  
the same time continuing to do justice to its  
practical work, - how to save the collection  
points and prospects to Science, and the  
Smithsonian, and how to secure the best  
results generally from this great creation of  
Prof. Baird. I wish there might be some  
subordination of the York Commission to the  
Smithsonian, but don't know how far this is possible.

~~But~~ I am sure that Congress will make some changes  
in the law organizing the Commission. I expect they  
will make the Commissioner like a salaried position.  
I have little doubt that I can have the place  
if I want it, for the President has as much as  
told me so. But I do not want to leave  
the Smithsonian. The increase of salary is not  
a temptation. I have given twenty years to  
preparation for museum work and for fifteen  
years I have been studying the National Museum  
and the methods of administration; and with Professor  
Baileys constant advice and help. He expects  
me to continue in the museum, and did all he  
could to place the State Commission in other hands.  
I honestly believe, though it may not be modest to say it,  
that the Museum needs my services for some years yet  
to come, and that "by reason of my training and experience  
I can do for it what no one else can do at present."

That was Professor Baird's idea too, and I feel that I ought to be guided by his judgment. Furthermore I feel a much deeper interest in the Museum, than in the York Comm. And I have not strength or capacity to continue in charge of both.

But if I let go of the York Commission it is likely that it will go to the politicians — And if I take it, and leave the museum, the very fact that it is no longer directly connected with the Smithsonian will cripple it scientifically on me.

Altogether I am in great perplexity, and I wish you could tell me what I ought to do. I am working night and day, trying to save the commission from going to pieces and expect to succeed, tentatively at least. — but I can't carry it alone much longer. I shall carry it however until I am certain that the wisdom and purity of Prof Baird's administration of it

affairs as so demonstrated that his money cannot suffer.

At one time I was afraid that the Commission would follow in the wake of the Coast Survey, - which would have been a blow to all the scientific institutions of the country. The President however decided to let the Commission manage its affairs from within, rather than order an investigation by outsiders, and the Commission is going to show itself worthy of his confidence.

I want to say, definitely, that I accepted this responsibility of the Commissionship of Yenching, solely because I considered it my duty, as an officer of the Smithsonian Institution to do so, and acting under the advice of the Acting Secretary.

Professor Langley is very kind and helpful in this matter, and has talked it over fully, and I hope he will talk with you about it - but I don't yet

see my own course of conduct clear before me.

Prof. Langley seems to think, or I judge that by words, though he does not say so directly, that I am likely to be drawn away from the Museum by the Yale Commission.

I do not feel willing to make this sacrifice even for the Yale Commission. — that is I ~~do~~ ~~not~~ prize the position of Assistant Secretary, with its partial freedom from responsibility, much more than I should the independent position of Commissioner of Y. M. S. — especially since the Museum work is that in which, above all others, I am interested, and since I feel it a privilege and an honor to be an officer of the Smithsonian Institution.

I do not expect you to answer this letter at length of course. I wanted to speak to you of these matters, and perhaps you may think it best to

mentas some of them to Prof Langley when you  
see him

If you feel disposed to give me any advice  
I shall be more than grateful, and I  
will gladly write more at length concerning any  
special phases of the situation if you wish it.

In conclusion, I feel that I must say again that  
it seems to me that the interests of the Smith-  
sonian and the science demand that a Secretary  
shall be elected at the earliest practicable moment.

Yours very sincerely  
Grover Cleveland